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TRANSLATING, HARM REDUCTION INTO POLICIES, THE SWISS EXPERIENCE

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Aims. The aim of this presentation is to illustrate how Switzerland was able to play such a pioneering role in the field of addiction treatment, by creating a drug policy integrating the medical prescription of diacetylmorphine (heroin) in the therapeutic arsenal of addiction treatments.

Discussion. The medical prescription of diacetylmorphine, introduced initially as a harm reduction measure, has been the exotic element of the Swiss drug policy of 1991 and probably still is one of the most controversial practices in

clinical medicine despite its documented effectiveness. Coalitions of change actors, across stakeholder groups from many professions and politicians on various levels, succeeded in formulating and starting initiatives for a new drug policy and its innovations.

Conclusion. In the case of Switzerland, the Swiss Confederation took a leading role by facilitating communication, encouraging scientific knowledge and bringing the various stakeholders on a platform to deliver a consensual political policymaking basis. This was facilitated by the Swiss direct democracy system. Sustained, dialogue between researchers and the users, of research enhances the likelihood of research affecting policy.